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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ACCRA 001412

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TAGS: ECON ETRD GH PGOV PREL

SUBJECT: GHANA'S PRESIDENT FORCES RESIGNATION OF KEY
MINISTERS

REF: ACCRA 1041

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Classified By: PolChief Scott Ticknor for reasons 1.4 (d) and (e).

¶11. (SBU) Summary: On June 23, President Kufuor gave all ministers aspiring to run for president until early July to resign. Four ministers have already submitted resignations, while five others (including the Foreign Minister and Minister of Trade and Industry) are expected to resign soon. The President's decision has been expected for several weeks and is designed to shift out of government ministers who have been focused more on campaigning than on their portfolios. Kufuor will likely name new ministers soon. The impact on governance and on the presidential race remain to be seen. Trade Minister Kyerematen's potential imminent departure is a new unknown in planning for the July AGOA Forum. End summary.

¶12. (U) On June 19 President Kufuor demanded the resign107QLkTourism and Diasporan Relations Jake Obestebi- Lamptey resigned and left office. The Ministers of Communications (Mike Oquaye), Water Resources, Works and Housing (Hackman Owusu-Agyeman), and Defense (Kwame Addo-Kufour) have also tendered resignations, although they have not yet been accepted by the President. Also expected to resign in the near future are the Ministers of Trade and Industry (Alan Kyerematen), Foreign Affairs and NEPAD (Nana Akufo-Addo), Parliamentary Affairs (Felix Owusu-Adjapong), Education and Sports (Papa Owusu-Ankomah), and Public Sector Reform (Paa Kwesi Nduom).

Comment

¶13. (SBU) As reported reftel, the NPP constitution requires that sitting ministers resign their portfolios when they formally register as presidential candidates. As a result, ministerial aspirants were expected to resign during the registration period, between September and November, in the lead-up to the December 2007 NPP convention. Kufuor's action was a widely expected preemptive move, designed to replace the heavily distracted ministerial aspirants with ministers who can focus more fully on government business.

¶14. (SBU) NPP Chairman Peter Mac Manu and NPP General Secretary Nana Ohene-Ntow initially complained that they were

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not adequately consulted in the President's decision

(although Kufuor had no constitutional requirement to consult the party). The aspirants wanted more time to benefit from the resources and profile of their portfolios. According to press reports, the public reaction has been mixed, with some arguing the ministers should have been allowed to stay on longer, while others believing that the ministers were using their offices for personal campaigning and should have been forced out. Our political contacts generally downplay the dropping of these ministers, arguing that they were not performing well because of their campaigning and that their bureaucracies will be able to function fine without them.

¶15. (C) By forcing the early resignation of so many ministers, Kufuor may also hope to strengthen his ability to influence the party's choice for president without worrying about appearing to favor one minister in his government over another. It is unfortunate for Ghana's leadership in the African Union Summit and for the July AGOA Conference. It is not clear whether Kyerematen will be allowed to remain for AGOA; however, even if he is, he will not be in a position to direct the implementation of decisions taken at the Forum.

¶16. (C) Kufuor is expected to name replacement ministers soon. Because new ministers require parliamentary vetting and parliament will be out of session from the end of July until early October, most analysts expect the President will

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fill the gaps by shifting existing ministers or by promoting deputy ministers (which would not require new vetting). While it is still early in the game, some possible replacements to take over these ministries include: Boniface Abu-Bakar Saddique for Minister of Trade and Industry (former Deputy Minister of Trade and Minister of the Northern Region and current Minister of Manpower), Mustafa Iddris for Minister of Foreign Affairs (former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and current Northern Regional Minister), and Deputy Minister of Education Kwame Amporfo Twumasi for Minister of Education and Sports. Kufuor may decide to eliminate the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, as was recommended by the African Peer Review Mechanism.

BRIDGEWATER